

**CREATIVE  
WRITING  
COMPETITION**

**2016**



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## **FOREWORD**

**BRIAN GOGGINS**

It is with great pleasure that we present this book; the first of what I hope will become the annual creative writing competition here in ES Mol. The range of talents on display over these pages is very impressive. Student from almost all years and sections are represented with writing in English, Dutch and Spanish contained in the book.

Firstly I would like to pay tribute to all our language teachers who have guided our students through their learning within the language and then created the environment that has allowed students to access their natural creativity and produce this marvellous selection of poems and short stories. Sir Ken Robinson once said that « You can't be a creative thinker if you're not stimulating your mind, just as you can't be an Olympic athlete if you don't train regularly ». This competition and the publication of this book is part of that training which we hope will stimulate other students to test the waters with their imagination and the creative writing process.

I would like to thank Winke Brits, our Librarian, who joined our staff last September and has worked tirelessly since then across so many areas within both the Nursery/Primary and the Secondary in the promotion of the arts, languages, creative writing and a huge range of other projects. We are very lucky to have a colleague who views the role of Librarian so widely.

I would like to pay tribute to all the students who entered a piece of work for this competition. I hope that you will continue to write and create outside the confines of this competition. I also hope, even more importantly that that you will continue to read. Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. I hope that

you have been given the gift of reading for pleasure, exploring new ideas, places and people through the words of a writer. This is one of the most important passions that we as a school hope you have taken away with you and that you will continue to read throughout your life.

Congratulations to all involved. Copies of this book will be placed in our Library so that other students can enjoy your work for many years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Goggins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian Goggins

Director

Dead. That was the only way to describe it. Dead and lifeless, just a shell of what had once been an incredible person. It lay just there, still and uncanny, empty eyes staring into nothingness.

May couldn't move. She couldn't let go of the hand, not as long as there was still a trace of warmth left in those fragile fingers. She looked down at the shrunken form of the most wonderful person in the whole wide world, whose once beautiful features were scarred by all the chemotherapy that had been performed on her. She'd known all along that Luna wouldn't make it. For that it had been too short a period of time. In February nothing had turned up on the MRI scan, and then, barely three weeks ago, the doctors said she had developed metastases. At least the cancer hadn't spread to the brain, leaving Luna her cheerful self. She had been as talkative as ever, and maybe even more so being barely able to stand up.

May had spent the past few weeks practically living next to Luna's hospital bed. She had been joined a couple of times by Luna's parents, Eric and Mary, but obviously her parents still didn't want anything to do with the 'disgraceful sinner' that was their daughter. At least Eric and Mary had made her feel welcome and at home.

They were there now too, sitting in the corner looking gaunt. The nurses were bustling around adjusting equipment and talking in hushed voices.

« I'm sorry dear, » the one with the unnaturally blonde ponytail said, « if you could let go of miss Grey's hand, we can bring her

to the morgue ». May looked up at the nurse and simply nodded. Her mind was blank, her heart heavy and there was a giant knot forming in the back of her throat as she watched the nurses leave the room, taking with them the vessel that, for nineteen years, had housed the mind of the most intelligent, humorous and carefree miracle of a person to have ever existed. From the corner came sound of crying, but for May the tears wouldn't come.

...

May had a soft spot for dates, romanticism and metaphors and so felt a strange kind of happiness at the date of the funeral: May 21st, exactly one month before Luna's birthday. May smiled softly to herself thinking about how Luna always used to laugh at her for her 'symbolism fetish'.

Mary and Eric had allowed her to make most of the choices for the ceremony, which was why they were now sitting outside, under a giant tent, the sun shining brightly. The coffin stood open, Luna wearing her gorgeous, dark blue graduation dress. She had looked so proud in it, so alive. Not even a year had passed since then. That will to live and that pride, at its clearest back when she'd previously worn the short blue garment, had been wiped from her features, leaving behind a pale impression of her complex yet wonderful character.

May got shaken out of her trance. The music had stopped. Realising it was her turn to make her speech, she stood up. She tried to keep her composure as she walked up to the platform, but her legs felt like jelly. She swallowed.

« I... We... » She swallowed again and took one deep steadying breath. « When first we met two years ago, you in your final year

of high school, I just a freshman, I remember you saying you liked my drawing. It was just a small comment, but the sheer fact that you found it worth the effort to look at weird fifteen year old me meant so much to me. » May paused for a moment looking to the coffin. Courage regained, she continued: «As we both know, it all went quickly from there on. Through my coming out, my parents disowning me and my angsty teenage fits you stayed with me. You never failed to listen patiently, reason with me, encourage me to abuse the pencils and paintbrushes rather than myself and you gave me a home. Your love is my strongest tie to life. The memories of your smile, your wonderfully over the top enthusiasm for your motorcycle, books, cooking and, most importantly, life and its adventures will always keep me going. » Another swallow. « I mightn't have known you long, but long enough to say this: The world has lost an amazing person. I will therefore honor our agreement and tell your parents, your brother and your countless friends your final wish. I'll make sure to tell them to never forget either you nor ever forget to live. »

It was quiet; the only sounds those of the birds in the trees and people sobbing into their handkerchiefs. Throat dry, that giant knot still there after nearly a week, May looked at Luna's body and the music started. As 'Please' started to play from the speakers she couldn't hold it back any longer. After nearly a week, the knot in her throat finally disappeared with the watering of her eyes.

**KEANU TAMTEKIN**

I am Hecate,  
Behind walls of silence I reside,  
Through the fruitless days I wander,  
For what purpose?  
By spell or by charm, I mean no harm.  
Looking down from the moon,  
I rid the world of the sinful,  
Lady Madness, Lady Ice,  
What is the difference?  
For I am one step ahead of the grim reaper,  
Yet so many steps away from morality.

As she sat on the cold church bench, Iris felt the streams of tears running down her cheeks. The tears from both eyes met at her chin where they formed droplets and fell down on her black dress. The grim church walls isolated the room and kept all emotions from escaping, making sure the depression stayed inside these walls. The room was filled to the brim with people who had loved her grandfather. She had no idea who half of the people were; she only saw their sorrowful faces, mourning.

The sobs and cries dominated the otherwise empty room. Every person had their gaze fixed on only one thing, the eerie coffin in the center of the room. The sobs increased as the coffin was carried out of the room.

What is the point of living if it all ends in grief?

It had been 39 days after the funeral, Iris had kept count. She lay on her bed in her bedroom, staring at the ceiling. Her room had always been a comforting place, but now the darkness had invaded it with its thoughts and worries. Iris didn't like nights, they were always so dark and gloomy. Her phone buzzed. Iris grabbed her phone and looked at the screen. The name 'Eliza' was written in white text across the screen, along with '4 missed calls'. The phone vibrated again, '1 new voicemail'. Iris raised the phone and listened to the message as she heard the cheerful voice of her friend. « Hi Iris, it's Eliza. I was wondering if you were still coming over this weekend to study together. You haven't been in school lately, so I haven't really had the chance to talk to you. » Eliza paused for a moment, a moment so long that Iris wished it had never existed. Then Eliza continued, but the happiness in her voice had been replaced by worry. « Iris,

what's wrong? You know that the others and I will always be here if you need help. You've been ignoring us lately and I really don't like the feeling. Call me back. Please. » That last word was spoken with worry and pleading and so many other emotions mixed together, causing an overwhelming guilt in Iris.

She hadn't told Eliza the real reason behind all of this. Eliza had figured out that it had something to do with her grandfather's death, but she would never even be able to fathom the core of the problem. It wasn't just her grandfather. It was the thought of who would be next. What if something unspeakable happened to her other family members or friends? What if death didn't stop at taking her beloved grandfather? If death could so easily take someone so joyful and peaceful as her grandfather, her partner in crime, her friend, her family, what would hinder it from taking her mother or her father or even her innocent little sister? Why do some people get to live until they are 100 years old, while others die tomorrow?

Iris cried. She cried because of the unfairness of it all. She had been robbed of future memories with her grandfather. She feared losing more future experience. She felt her friend Eliza's disappointment, but that was stupid. For what is the point of having friends if it all ends in grief? That morning Iris woke up with swollen bloodshot eyes and thick dark rings under them, like she had every morning since the day of the funeral.

«... Happy birthday to you. » Everyone in the room sang as they finished the song. They all sat at little tables in the richly-decorated room. It was her aunt's fiftieth birthday. More importantly, it had been 163 days since the funeral, Iris had

noted to herself. Iris was seated at a table. As the other guests went to dance, Iris found herself alone with her grandmother.

« Iris, are you not going to dance? »

Iris didn't respond, she only shook her head.

« What's troubling you? »

« Nothing. » Iris looked down at her folded hands.

Her grandmother tried to smile at her, but it didn't quite work.

« I know that something is wrong. » Iris frowned, but her grandmother continued to explain. « Your mom told me that you've been distressed lately, that you've not been eating nor sleeping. »

Silence. Iris resented answering that question, she preferred to stay in her comfortable shell and never come out. She knew that people wouldn't understand. They would laugh at her and think she was silly.

« I thought we had promised each other to never keep secrets when you were five. » She looked Iris in the eyes, not menacing, but with a soft, yet taunting gaze. « It will be easier if you tell someone, I promise you. »

Iris stayed silent for a moment before she answered. « I'm just afraid, » she said in a voice so quiet it was almost a whisper, « that something will happen to someone else. I'm terrified that someone else is going to die. » Her grandmother didn't respond at first, she only nodded.

« How can you not be sad over grandfather's funeral? » Iris asked.

« Oh I am, I am sad every single day, but I owe it to him to live. Anyone could die any day, but that is not a reason for us to live in fear. We have to enjoy the time we have, if we don't, life is pointless. »

« But it will hurt more when it ends. » Iris said this in a determined and insisting tone.

« It will always hurt, but it will hurt even more if you regret not using the time you could have had. We can only honour the dead by living, not by living in the past, but living right now, in the moment. »

First, there was a silence that said more than enough. Then, for the first time in forever, Iris smiled.

The point of living is to make sure you don't regret.

*Second prize short stories*

Jason walked across the road, a slave to the music in his ears, the melody pounding in his head. A high-pitched noise, he turned his head towards it. A scream? Yes, a scream. It became his as a car struck him.

Darkness, warmth. He felt pleasure like never before, serenity... Yet he could hear a distant clamour, a chaotic background sound made up of screams and sobs... He tuned it out, focusing only on the warm sensation, the peaceful sensations. Light filled his vision, memories of his past flashed before his eyes, as real as anything he had ever seen before. Cautiously, he opened his senses... There it was, the background noise. The screams were gone, however, the noise had evolved. Now there were voices, both deep and high, speaking to someone. Quieter still was the sound of sirens. Wailing like the Sirens of Greek myth, calling him to shore.

As suddenly as the comparison had come to mind, he knew it to be true. He was away, away from his body. He was suddenly aware of his body, breathing shakily yet alive but filled with pain, so much pain. Focusing on the peaceful dark, the serene warmth once more his pains seemed to fade. The background noise swelled, becoming louder and more panicked. Curiosity. He tried to open up his senses once again, to hear, to feel, to smell but something blocked him. It was as if he was moving against a current, a current that wished to take him away from his body. Fear spiked within him followed by determination. Fighting the current he pushed forward and suddenly he was overwhelmed by pain. The pain was nearly too much to bear, he could not focus on anything but the pain. The background noise slowly became

louder and less slurred than it had been before. He could not move nor feel anything other than an overwhelming pain. Suddenly his taste returned, blood, sharp, metallic. Yet... Somehow lacking. It did not feel nearly as real as what he had felt in that serene darkness, that perfect nothing. Nothing could compare to the beauty of that moment. He stopped fighting the pain, slowly slipping back into the heavenly darkness, the idyllic silence.

Suddenly the fury of Zeus struck his chest, pulling him out of nothing towards sensation, towards pain. Desperately, he tried to get away from it but before he could, another shock went through him. Suddenly the darkness was nowhere to be found, immense pain flooded through him. Then, there was light. And sound. And smell. He was back.

*Based on real life near death experiences.*

Cuando entré en mi casa, todo estaba oscuro. Divisé entre las sombras el interruptor y lo apreté, sintiendo cómo la luz me acechaba por un segundo. Por un segundo me molestó, pero lo reprimí al sentir lo extraño de la situación.

¿Por qué están todas las cortinas cerradas? ¿Mamá no vino aún?

Caminé a las ventanas y las abrí. El sol se estaba escondiendo, y la luna empezaba a hacer su aparición. El silencio que invadía esta casa me asustaba. A estas horas, mamá tendría que estar aquí, preparando la cena. ¿Le habrá pasado algo?

«No hay que preocuparse, seguro le faltó algún ingrediente y tuvo que irse al supermercado.»

Me encogí de hombros y arrojé mi mochila al sillón. Subí las escaleras, y volví a hacer el favor de prender las luces. Toda la absoluta casa estaba en negro. Sentí mi panza gruñir. No había comido nada, me quedé hasta ahora haciendo el trabajo para física en la biblioteca. Con mi cuerpo ya bastante cansado para más, terminé de subir las escaleras, cuando un débil gemido se escuchó.

Fruncí el ceño. Esa era mamá, seguro.

«¿Mamá?» le llamé, aunque no obtuve respuesta, nada más que un sollozo.

Ella estaba llorando.

Me alarmé muchísimo y empecé a correr a su habitación. Tomé el pomo de la puerta y tomé una bocanada de aire. No me

gustaría asustarla. Abrí con calma la puerta y la vi ahí, tirada en su cama. Lloraba de forma despavorida, mientras sostenía un pequeño marco de foto en su mano derecha.

Paré en seco.

Cuando vi a mamá ... sentí cómo mi mundo se caía. Ella nunca lloraba... jamás. Siempre se guardaba sus problemas, no quería que la viésemos derrumbada. No otra vez. Si lloraba enfrente de mí tenía que ser algo grave. Y ninguna de las dos estaba preparada para soportar algo así de nuevo.

« ¿Mamá... qué te pasa ? » dudé, acercándome un poco.

Ella alzó sus profundos ojos azules y me miró directamente. Ahí entendí que era tan grave que no podía decirlo ni en voz alta.

« María » susurró, y sentí que su voz me creaba un nudo en la garganta.

Su armoniosa voz denotaba cansancio y depresión, aparte de que su cara estaba bañada en lágrimas y parecía extremadamente pegajosa. Me acerqué lentamente a ella... al marco. ¿De quién hablaba? ¿Por qué lloraba? Divisé a la persona del marco, y sentí cómo mis piernas flaqueaban y cedían, cayendo yo de rodillas al piso.

Era... era Rocío. Mi hermana.

« Mamá... ¿Qué le pasó ? » exigí saber, siendo consciente de que yo había empezado a llorar también. « Ma-mamá, di-dime que e-ella está bi-bien. » Ella comienza a lloriquear con más pronunciación, cosa que me desvaneció las esperanzas. « ¡Di-

dime que no lo repitió ! » salté a la defensiva sin siquiera darme cuenta, cuando ella me miró con rabia y me gritó :

« ¡Claro que lo hizo, María ! ¡Ella volvió a tomar esas... esas pastillas y ella... Y ella... » Chillaba, mientras se debilitaba con cada palabra. « Ella se ha ido ».

Un dolor fuerte se hizo presente en mi pecho. Mi vista se nublaba, un nudo que no parecía querer desatarse apareció. Sentí como toda mi plena y deseable vida se convirtió en una basura.

Rocío me arrancó las ganas de vivir. ¿Cómo soportaría no verla día a día, hablarle, reírme junto a ella, contarle mis historias, ayudarla con la tarea, cotillear, probarnos ropa juntas... ? ¿Cómo soportaría tener que ser hija única, cuánto dolería que me hablen de ella ? ¿Cómo soportaría tener que decir en voz alta que ella... que ella... que ella había muerto ?

Sollocé. Lloré, grité, maldecí. Me enojé conmigo misma por no haber podido ser capaz de haber ido con ella a la fiesta. Me odié... y eso no cambió. Me odio, me detesto. La gente cree que no tengo la culpa... pero es mentira. Yo la dejé ir, ella me había prometido que se cuidaría... si hubiese estado ahí, todo hubiese sido diferente.

Ella estaría aquí conmigo, me abrazaría, me contaría un chiste malo típico de ella... me invitaría a comer algo para subirme el ánimo. Y yo le compraría esos zapatos marca *Nike* que tanto observaba el otro día. Le recomendaría más libros para que pueda animarse en esos momentos en los que todo fuese gris. Le diría « te amo ». Se fue, y yo lo último que le dije fue « cuídate ».

« ¿Mamá... cómo fue que pasó ? » le pregunté, aunque me costó reconocer mi voz.

« Ella... ella fue a esa estúpida fiesta, María. Ahí le ofrecieron esas pastillas, la obligaron a tomársela... y resulta que no fue un simple éxtasis, María... era tan dañino que... que... »

Asentí, haciendo que ella dejase de hablar.

Esto es una pesadilla.

¿Cuándo fue que nuestra vida tomó un rumbo así ? ¿Cuándo fue que la dejé ir ? Me odio.

Yo la llevé a ese ambiente en su día, si hubiese sido inteligente ella estaría viva. Ella estaría viva.

Me levanté del piso, sintiendo cómo mis músculos funcionaban poco, y caminé al patio. Cada paso que daba era una daga en el corazón, pero seguí caminando. Me senté en el césped, olí el aire fresco y volví a ver el árbol en el que tantas veces jugamos ambas.

Recuerdo que una vez nos subimos a la rama más alta, y casi nos caemos. Mamá nos regañó como nunca, diciendo que podríamos lastimarnos.

¿Y ella no se preocupó en su momento porque este dolor aparezca en nuestras vidas ?

Una delicada hoja se posó sobre mi pierna apenas empecé a llorar, y ahí me di cuenta de todo.

La vida se asemeja a una hoja. Al principio aparece, pequeña, ingenua y alegre, y va creciendo con el paso de los días. Cuando llega a ser grande y madura, cae, muriendo y despegándose por fin del gran árbol de la vida.

Pero la mía fue diferente. Mi verde y enana hoja fue arrancada por una persona y fue tirada al piso con desprecio, aunque ni siquiera fuese su intención.

*First prize short stories*

## IK BEN IK, JIJ BENT JIJ

LUCCA VERMUE

Ik ben ik, jij bent jij  
Daar is toch geen Frans woord bij  
Je t'aime?  
Dat past er toch niet bij?  
Iedereen is er altijd als de  
Kippen bij.  
VTM  
NOS  
BBC  
Maar ja,  
Als Parijs niest,  
Vat Europa kou  
Au!  
Ze bombarderen ons in het nauw.  
Maar we blijven zo fier als een pauw.  
Een vredesduif dat is wat ik wou!

*Third prize poems*

## SEQUIM ON A SUMMER DAY

VELIA BUCCILLI

As the sun slowly begins to crawl past the misty, purple mountains over Sequim, all the lights are out. The familiar hooting of an owl echoes in the distance. The sweet, sickly smell of pine drifts down the streets, past the cottages and the pool. Fields of dew-spotted grass shimmer. The glistening, silver eyes of a fox follow the morning robins, waiting for the perfect moment to pounce. A sudden rush of the Dungeness River crashing against the rocks breaks the quiet. This lasts a minute, and then the stream shoves the rock under the water, continuing its journey to the sea. A bald eagle sits perched high up in the trees, the breeze ruffling its sleek, brown feathers. It gives a final cry before it launches into the misty air, and then swoops back down to the river to hunt for a juicy river trout. A distant howl echoes through the valley, catching a deer's attention. Its black, beady eyes search for the source, with ears perked up, and then it jumps the fence, dashing back into the shrubs.

A cool morning breeze rushes through the waking town, while children and adults slowly rise from bed. There are a few people in the pool; they are swimming morning laps. The greasy smell of bacon floats out of the houses, catching the attention of dogs being walked. The harmonious tweet of robins fills the air, like a beautiful melody. The feeling of the air is damp, though it is a warm morning. The sun's rays illuminate the streets, while a black cat crosses the road in search of a snack. The whoosh of cars racing down the busy road, past the community center, comes frequently. Beautiful blooming flowers cover the lawns like colorful quilts, and the smell of honeysuckle is strong. Children creep out of the houses, like bears after hibernation, sluggish, wishing for another hour in bed. The mothers shoo

them out like unwanted street cats, whilst they groan and plead to be let in. The cry of a rooster rings. People slowly drive to their last day of work, ready for the summer.

The sun is beating down on the city of Sequim, sidewalks sizzling like frying pans. The air is so thick it is hard to breath. Wandering children in groups stagger down the streets like drunken people, sweat dripping down their faces. Hoses are turned on, waving back and forth on the lawns, like snakes. Children and adults splash happily in the pool, screaming with joy, and diving off the board and spitting water at each other. Hundreds of people fill the berry fields, searching for ripe fruit. Ice-cream stores overflow with customers, waiting patiently for the famous herby taste of lavender ice cream. A big, black dog lays passed out on a dry, brown lawn. In front of him sits a child, stroking his hot, thick coarse fur. Old men sit on their front porches, clinking their summer drinks. The ice in their glasses is gone, leaving a watery version of their beverages. Teenage girls in short summer dresses come strutting down the sidewalks, wearing big, floppy sun hats and sunglasses smudged with sticky fingerprints. The smell of sunscreen overpowers, as it lingers in every corner of the city. It is a bitter smell.

Soon people are returning from a busy day at work, greeting their expectant families at the doorways. A cool breeze passes through the city, sweeping away the humid air. There is still light outside, but the day is coming to an end. The last people in the pool crawl out shivering, with red-rimmed eyes. Children playing outside are soon called in by their mothers, and groans and grunts of disagreement follow shortly. The crash of the Dungeness can be heard once again, not muted out by the laughter of people enjoying their summer. Families all sit inside

their homes, eating fresh vegetables and berry pies. The old men are still on their porches, but they slowly pick up all of their trash and fold-up chairs, and head inside their cottages. There are people walking their dogs on the dykes that flow alongside the river, enjoying the freshness of the evening. The sky is slowly dimming as the sun begins to set and Sequim settles down.

Now the sky is oily and black, like ink from a dripping pen. Stars cover the whole sky. The howl of animals echoes in the valley, followed by a moan. The moon illuminates the night streets, making the eyes of a cat shimmer. It is a warm night, but there is a breeze. The hoot of an owl fills the streets with an eeriness, yet it's almost a beautiful melody. In the forest, massive pine trees shoot up into the sky like towers, covering the light of the moon. Their bark is rough, full of crevasses and sticky with sap. The forest is dark, yet a lonesome raccoon still wanders down the abandoned path. His fur has been smoothed down by the fresh evening. Farther down the path, a bush of wild raspberries grow. Their flavor is sour and unripe, yet the scent of sweet, ripe raspberries lingers. The breeze rustles the leaves in a tree, and then all falls silent.

## TIJDELIJKE EEUWIGHEID

BOGDAN ARTEMOV

we waren dronken van de lentelucht  
en mogelijk ook door de wijn  
we rolden onder de sterren hemel  
waar wij het heelal beschreven  
als geluk

en enkele dagen later was het weg  
maar mijn hartje schreeuwt, danst en  
springt  
nog wel een poosje  
door

*First prize poems*

I don't remember much from my past; all I know is that in the beginning there was darkness. The kind that makes you feel warm and safe, miles away from the pain in this world. But the comfort of the dark didn't last forever, soon the inescapable torture found me and I was thrown into a world of misery.

I remember my brothers and sisters, there were eight of us. Things were busy but we got along, we didn't have the luxury to argue. There was barely enough food to go around and even less space. We huddled closely together at night, comforting one another. Sometimes our mother would sing to us, reassuring us that everything would be fine, those were the best days but like all good things, they ended too soon. Our mother was taken away from us and over time, my brothers and sisters were taken too.

My Name is Raz, or at least, I think it is. I don't know how old I am or how long I have left to live, all I know is that I'm cursed, we all are.

Sometimes I dream about what life would be like if we were all free to do as we pleased, but it's pointless. In this dystopian world I live in, we're kept as slaves, in confining cells, all alone. There are no toilets or beds, I'm not sure what they put in the food but I'm sure it's nothing good. The sole time I got to be around anyone was when I shared a cell with my siblings but now the only other voices I hear are the screams that keep me up at night.

I'm snapped out of my thoughts by frightened shouts.  
« The keepers, » someone whispers anxiously.

« They're coming! » says another.

I instinctively shuffle to the corner of my cell but it provides little protection. I hear the loud thuds getting louder and brace myself for what's to come. I hold my breath, praying that they pass me. My chest contorts as the door to my cell opens and I realise the dreaded day has finally arrived, I'm being taken away.

Why, I don't know. Where to, I have even less of a clue. The only thing I know is that it's better to do as you're told. I cautiously make my way out of the cell and travel down the corridor, passing the others. I catch a few sympathetic glances but keep my eyes trained forward.

Moments later, I'm in a larger cell, but it does little good as it seems I'm not the only one being taken away. There are many frightened faces and confused whispers, no one else knows what's going on either.

Nobody knows anything about the keepers or where they came from. However, some say that they're some sort of alien race that's taken control of the planet. The keepers are tall, almost giant like, shadow beings. Their features are all very similar making it hard to tell the difference between them. As far as speaking goes, they seem to communicate through deep, humming noises.

We've been in this cell for ages and the air is growing thick and hot. Fresh air is limited and everyone is fighting for it. It must have been hours and still we're trapped in this room. We're all wondering what's going on, whether the keepers have forgotten about us.

When the doors of the room finally open there is light outside, almost like we've been teleported to the outside world. Everyone is pushing and shoving to get to the light. I make it past the doors and breathe in fresh air for the first time in my life. The glee is ripped away from me when I feel an agonizing jolt. I cry out in pain and turn around in panic. I notice the keepers are prodding everyone with some sort of rod, I'm so confused but the panicked crowd pushes me forward.

Are the keepers just taunting us with this false sense of freedom? My questions are answered when I'm pushed into a small cage. I'm so confused as to what's happening and why we're being put in cages the size of coffins.

There are three of us in this coffin sized cage, the young boy next to me looks up with terrified eyes and I give him a reassuring nudge only for him to fall to the ground in a spasm, I start to panic but not long after, I feel it too.

I feel the burning, searing pain in my lungs. I'm breathing in air but my lungs still burn. Soon it's not only my lungs, everything is on fire. I call out for help, asking anyone to stop this pain inside me. I yell helplessly at the keepers to stop the burning but I know they can't understand.

Just when I feel I can't hang on any longer the burning stops. I turn to my left, relieved that we're going to be alright. My heart starts racing in my chest and my head spins as I see the others aren't moving.

« Wake up! » I say.

«Wake up!!! » I scream at them, but they don't respond, « please, please wake up. »

I feel myself losing the last piece of hope I had left and the world around me turns black.

I wake up to a loud rumbling noise and pounding in my head. I soon realise I'm hanging upside down and moving. How did I get here? What's going on?

I look around and hold back a terrified scream. I'm not the only one hanging and moving. There are many of us here, all dangling upside down. I try to pull my eyes away from what I see in front of me but it's no use.

I watch as a keeper comes up to somebody who's hanging upside down and see a quick flash of silver. Moments later a fountain of red spills from their neck. My breathing quickens and I know it won't be long before it's my turn.

Why are they doing this? I've done nothing wrong!

I send out a silent prayer, hoping that my siblings are in a better place, far away from the monstrous keepers.

I screw my eyes shut just as I see the flashing of the silver blade.

RAZ  
JANUARY 1 2016 - APRIL 29 2016  
CAUSE OF DEATH: CAME TO A TRANQUIL END  
FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PORK

*Third prize short stories*

**LYNCH POEM NO. 1**

**DANIEL VIVES LYNCH**

Despite all that I am told (Life goes on)  
[Like leaves falling from a tree]

Everything is a lie (No matter what I do)  
[We all live and die]

There are only false truths (This is my true sadness)  
[‘This’ is life]

I am left alone to contemplate (yet no one hears me)  
[What I know, no one hears]

My conclusion is thus (No matter how much I weep of it)  
[For what I hear no one knows]

Life holds no meaning (So I wait)  
[Which results in nothing]

*Second prize poems*

The atmosphere felt empty and silent as if it was just waiting for trouble to brew. The misty air echoed with black fear, so contagious it was like the plague, everyone had it. The full moon stalked every street in town, leaving not one person with privacy. The sky was dark like a witch's soul, looming with thunder and lightning so loud it wouldn't let anyone finish a sentence. All services and power was out, there was no escape. But amongst all this the hauntingly beautiful, magnificent, old Victorian mansion stood elegantly imposing in the brilliant light of the enormous full moon. Talula loved that house. She lived there with her parents, brother and grandmother.

There was a time when it looked like they may have to leave that magnificent mansion, when business wasn't going so well for her father. Potential buyers came to look at the house, but strangely none were interested. They always left hurriedly, ashen faced.

Talula, an arrogant, selfish, young girl was weeping away in her room. It was one year since her grandmother, Agatha died. They said they saw her body, white and ethereal floating in the stream. Talula wouldn't look at the body. She was looking to the stars instead. She was looking for a sign, guidance.

When the old woman had closed herself off from the world, Talula did the same. She had to. She was the only one entrusted with the old woman's secrets. They had talked together about her grandmother's sins of her past. She didn't want to do it anymore! Talula was alone the night the police reported her grandmother dead. Foul play was suspected, but Talula knew

otherwise. Much to Talula's relief, the old woman's body was never located.

Soon after, Talula started hearing strange noises. Footsteps from outside, which turned out to be her dog. Tapping sounds coming from the room next door, but it was just her brother messaging someone on his mobile phone. The sudden groan from a zombie coming from downstairs! The startling zombie turned out to be noises from a horror movie her parents were watching. « Just give me a sign, tell me what to do? » Talula pleaded with Agatha.

Approaching midnight and trying desperately to fall asleep, Talula heard a high pitched scream followed by a tap on her window. She tried to dismiss both as paranoia but at the back of her mind was the memory of the terrible things the old woman had done in the past. Could it be that the past was catching up with Talula, punishing her for knowing this secret? Was it retribution for her grandmother's wicked ways?! Maybe she should tell someone? It took a long time for her to finally fall asleep.

Suddenly she found herself in a strange place, a place filled with bones and skeletons, some type of Hell! She wasn't sure if she was screaming or the echoes of screams were being heard.

« Where am I? » she yelled! A crying voice answered: « The land of lost souls and dreams. » Talula started crying out as now she figured she will never get home since her and her wicked grandma made so many lives hell and now it was her turn to suffer.

Her mewling was interrupted by the same familiar tap and screech. At first she started running to try to escape but the dark presence was following her like a vicious, poisonous snake

hungry for its prey. She ran and ran but it was useless, it was like climbing a skyscraper with no grip. She decided to follow it, confront the tormenter. But instead, she found herself so feeble and exhausted that she collapsed to the ground like the last leaf on a tree in autumn. Suddenly she saw a dim slither of light. She heard a door slammed shut. But there were no doors. No windows. Just a tap and a screech.

There it stood. Just a shady figure, bony, mysterious and shrouded completely in black. She yelled at the black mass, demanding to know why she was there rather than in the comfort of her bed. She asked why it has been tormenting her. She kept asking questions but it said nothing in reply. Finally she became so exasperated that she charged at it with full force. The thing pushed her back with a dark force and a sinister laugh. She began crying again. It pointed its ugly, long, sinister finger at the wall revealing lengthy words engraved in the wall. Loyal goons were standing on either side of the writing, sniggering in each other's ears, « Read it, read it » followed by another sinister laugh.

The story read:

*Once there lived a woman named Agatha. She was almost burnt at the stake under the sentence of being a witch. She escaped but vowed revenge on everyone who attended the ceremony. True to her word she made their lives a living hell, casting evil spells on a whim, even if people looked her way. Her granddaughter Talula knew this history, she was her accomplice.*

Talula took one last look at it before running off. She was petrified with fear. It knew her grandmother's past, everything she ever did. It also knew Talula, it was watching her. Talula assumed that only she and her grandmother knew about their

evil schemes. As Talula fled, all kinds of thoughts were rushing through her mind. How did this thing know her past, how could she get out of there? She ran faster than she thought was possible, her legs working on auto pilot.

It was too late, she didn't see the black hole. She was falling, spinning out of control, it seemed never ending. She landed with a huge thud, startled in a pool of dripping sweat and fear. Her head was hurting. She was disoriented. Rubbing her eyes, her focus on familiar objects became clearer. Her wardrobe, teddy bears, pictures on her wall. The alarm clock read 10 am. She was back in her room. She then remembered what she had just gone through. She felt an intense sense of relief. It was all just a dream. She was safe.

Talula continued with her usual routine, the wicked ways of making people's lives miserable, just as her Agatha had taught her. She didn't stop as she figured it was just a dream, it meant nothing. She had no regrets and no-one stood in her way. She could do as she pleased.

When Talula got home from school she looked in the mirror to admire herself. She was a beautiful girl on the outside but with a rotten core. As she was preparing to go to sleep she heard the same tapping and screaming sounds she heard the night before. She froze with fear. The shady figure, dressed completely in black appeared in her mirror. Stepping out of the mirror, it threatened « I warned you! » Talula screamed and the figure took off its veil only to reveal Talula's face. Her parents rushed to her room, but 'Talula' was just sitting there.

The European School of Mol wishes to congratulate all participants of the school's first Creative Writing Competition.

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